



April 17, 2008

Ms. Susan Golding, Chair and Task Force Members
MLPA Blue Ribbon Taskforce
c/o California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814
Via Email: MLPACComments@resources.ca.gov

Support for Proposal 4

Dear Chair Golding and Task Force Members:

Santa Monica Baykeeper's mission is to protect and restore the Santa Monica Bay, San Pedro Bay, and adjacent waters through enforcement, fieldwork, and community action. We work to improve water quality as well as restore watersheds and marine habitats. The Santa Monica Baykeeper has more than 6,000 members who care deeply about protecting and restoring the health of the state's coast and waters. We have been following the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) process closely as we prepare for it to move to southern California. We are impressed with the dedication of the stakeholders, Blue Ribbon Task Force members, MLPA Initiative staff, and scientists working on this effort. **Santa Monica Baykeeper urges the Blue Ribbon Task Force to select Proposal 4 as your preferred alternative for the North Central Coast Region of the Marine Life Protection Act.**

Santa Monica Baykeeper (SMBK) has been engaged in kelp restoration and monitoring in the marine environment for more than a decade. SMBK's kelp project has trained more than 100 scientific divers and restored more than three acres of giant kelp forests in the Sanat Monica Bay. Additionally, in excess understand the need for comprehensive protection of our precious coastal marine resources. SMBK divers assist the Vantuna Research Group of Occidental College in gathering baseline data for the MLPA process in southern California.

90% of our kelp forest canopy along the southern California mainland has been lost. We are confident that fully protected reserves, once implemented in southern California, will be effective at stabilizing and reversing this downward trend. Over 800 species inhabit the kelp forest, and approximately one-fourth of all California marine species depend on kelp forest habitat during some part of their life cycle. We are already involved in reaching out to the local scuba diving community to inform them of this process and how it can help southern California.

We are anxiously awaiting for the MLPA process to begin in southern California, so the myriad benefits from reserves can be realized as soon as possible. Upcoming climate change is a serious threat to marine communities. A network of large reserves would benefit coastal marine ecosystems by acting as a chain of protected islands for migrating species. Reserves have also been shown to be more resilient to disturbance and El Nino warming periods than impacted areas.

In creating the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), the California Legislature found that there was a need to "redesign California's MPA system to increase its coherence and its effectiveness at protecting the state's marine life, habitat, and ecosystems." (California Fish and Game Code § 2853(a)). Further, the MLPA states that "marine life reserves" (defined as no-take areas) are essential elements of an MPA system because they "protect habitat and ecosystems, conserve biological diversity, provide a sanctuary for fish and other sea life, enhance recreational and educational opportunities, provide a reference point against which scientists can measure changes elsewhere in the marine environment, and may help rebuild depleted fisheries." (California Fish and Game Code Section 2851(f)). **Of the three packages before you, Proposal 4 contains the highest level of protection and does the best job of meeting the goals of the MLPA, which means it has the best chance of being effective as a scientifically-based network to protect the biological diversity and fisheries for which our coast is famous.**





Proposal 4 has several advantages including:

- Receiving the highest ranking by the Scientific Advisory Team in meeting MLPA guidelines;
- Offering the highest level of protection to special places like the rocky reefs along the Sonoma Coast and the historic Fitzgerald Marine Park, while still allowing small boat fisherman to access the sea and sustain traditional fisheries;
- Protecting 15 percent of the ocean in no-take marine reserves, while leaving 85 percent open to fishing and includes biodiversity hotspots, nurseries and other high quality habitats; and
- Having the support of a wide range of interests including local residents, scientists, conservation experts, and recreational users.

Ease of enforcement is critical to ensuring that the goals of the MLPA are met, and that the ecological, recreational, and economic benefits of marine protected areas are fully realized. Marine reserves are the simplest of all marine protected areas to enforce. Proposal 4 will simplify enforcement and thereby minimize the costs to implement the program. Implementing no-take reserves at key places such as the rock formations and deep habitats north of Salt Point State Park, the reefs north of Bodega Head, and the diversity hot spot along Fitzgerald Marine Park is critical to the success of this endeavor. Proposal 4 also protects the vulnerable inter-tidal ecosystem at scenic Sea Lion Cove near Point Arena and the rockfish nursery habitat at Duxbury Reef. In contrast, Proposal 2-XA is the least easy to enforce and therefore the most likely to fail in both its resource protection and its economic goals. In several areas, Proposal 2-XA simply misses the mark, leaving Duxbury Reef completely unprotected and selecting less ecologically valuable areas for inclusion.

Proposal 4 was developed with extensive input from local residents, divers, sport and commercial fisherman, and scientists. This collaboration enabled the Proposal 4 stakeholder team to leave popular fishing spots open and minimize potential impacts on ports. All parties involved have worked hard to ensure that the requirements of the MLPA are met, but Proposal 4 does the best job of creating a legacy that will meet the goals of the Act and truly protect our magnificent coastal ecosystems.

Proposal 4, which contains the highest percentage of fully protected marine reserves, is an investment in the future health of our coastal waters. You have a historic opportunity to make a real difference in the protection of our oceans for current and future generations. We urge you to make the most of that opportunity by adopting Proposal 4. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

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